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ACTION DS-00

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TEDE-00 INR-00 IO-00 ITC-01 LAB-01 L-00 VCE-00
M-00 AC-01 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OCS-03 OES-01 OMB-01
OPIC-01 OPR-01 PA-00 PM-00 PRS-00 ACE-00 P-00
SCT-00 SP-00 IRM-00 SSO-00 SS-00 STR-00 TEST-00
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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5472
INFO OPEC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

UNCLAS CARACAS 000998

NSC FOR AMB MAISTO
USCINCSO FOR POLAD
DEPT CA FOR MARY A. RYAN
DEPT ALSO FOR DS/OP/WHA AND S/ES-O_DS/OP/CC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: ECON, PGOV, PREL, EPET, ASEC, CASC, VE

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CMS TaskForce3I**Heading:**

Caracas 998 SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED IMMEDIATE

SUBJECT: SITREP: SATURDAY APRIL 13, 16:30**CORRECTED COPY (LONG LINES)**

REF: A. CARACAS 00984 B. CARACAS 00980 C. CARACAS
00974 D. CARACAS 00973 E. CARACAS 00966 F. CARACAS
00948 G. CARACAS 00986 H. CARACAS 00992 I. CARACAS 00996

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.**FOREIGN MINISTRY CLOSED**

1. The embassy received word from a government contact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working under normal conditions since 7:30 this morning.

However, a report came in to the embassy that the Foreign Ministry closed this afternoon because of public demonstrations. This morning, ministry officers had met and were waiting for the new authorities to send an institutional response to the international community. The highest ranking director in the ministry is reported to be Oscar Hernandez, who used to be at the WTO in Geneva. Other directors include: Director of Frontiers, Director for the Americas (Blanca Verlezza), and Director in Charge of Protocol (Norman Monagas). As of noon today, Ex-minister Davila has not contacted the Ministry.

PRO-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATIONS

2. RSO report that a pro-Chavez crowd of up to 3,000 persons is currently demonstrating at Miraflores palace. About 3,000 are also at Fuerte Tiuna, and smaller demonstrations are reported at Catia and Sucre. All demonstrations are passive for the moment.

3. POLOFF in the Sabana Grande shopping area reports at 2:40 p.m. that all businesses are closed. Pedestrian traffic is light, and people seem calm. There is a heavy police presence in the area of approximately 50-60 heavily armed officers. There are clear signs that a disturbance took place recently in the area. Trash is burning, and garbage barrels have been torn from their posts. There are no signs of looting, however. Local television stations are playing soap operas, movies, and international news events, but nothing local.

THE REST OF THE COUNTRY

4. Other areas of the country are reporting normal activity. Barcelona and Puerto la Cruz report no activity, and in Maracaibo, there has been some looting in some of the poorer neighborhoods circling the city, but nothing in town. More information regarding the situation in regional population centers will be reported septel.

SHAPIRO